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[Redacted]

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5 January 1979

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ALERT MEMORANDUM

MEMORANDUM FOR: National Security Council
SUBJECT : China-Vietnam

Attached for your information is an alert memorandum
on China-Vietnam.


STANSFIELD TURNER

Attachment: [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

[REDACTED]

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ALERT MEMORANDUM

CHINA-VIETNAM

Vietnamese military operations against Kampuchea are proceeding rapidly in the face of only token resistance from out-gunned and out-manned Kampuchean units. With some Vietnamese forces already west of the Mekong River and within striking distance of Phnom Penh, it is possible that the capital could fall or be abandoned in the next several days and a Vietnamese client regime be established there. At the same time, China appears to be preparing for a major show of force along its frontier with Vietnam. Thus, the present situation contains the seeds of rapid escalation to Sino-Vietnamese conflict and heightened Sino-Soviet tension. [REDACTED]

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Beijing's inability to forestall the Vietnamese invasion amounts to a major setback to Chinese prestige and security interests. The Chinese likely feel compelled to demonstrate in some tangible way their determination to resist any further expansion of Vietnamese "hegemony" and shore up China's credibility as an Asian power. To this end the Chinese are preparing to support resistance forces based in the western half of Kampuchea and hope to embroil Vietnam in a costly and protracted military involvement in Kampuchea. [REDACTED]

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In considering their next move, the Chinese must weigh the political and economic costs of a protracted military conflict with Vietnam. The Chinese may choose to engineer a strong localized demonstration of Chinese power along the frontier--perhaps the temporary occupation of disputed territory as they did in India in 1962. But we cannot rule out more forceful action such as Chinese airstrikes deeper into the country. Nor can we rule out miscalculation that could lead to a level of conflict both sides would prefer to avoid. [REDACTED]

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If the Chinese escalate the level of hostilities, we would expect Moscow to respond first by conspicuously stepping up its military aid to Vietnam, by making a naval show of force off the coast of Vietnam, perhaps even a port visit, and by holding high-level consultations under Article Six of the recently concluded Friendship Treaty. If none of the above appeared to be deterring the Chinese, the Soviets might then begin a campaign of intimidation along the Sino-Soviet border--including demonstrative military air and ground patrolling, military maneuvers and ultimately, some sort of limited military provocation. [REDACTED]

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